

**THE  
KNOWLES-NELSON  
STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**

**Guidelines for  
Nonprofit Conservation Organizations**

*A Partnership in Conservation*  
**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources**

Rev. 1996

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## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

### **Introduction**

Welcome to the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program. The Wisconsin Legislature created this ten-year, \$250-million program in 1989 to expand opportunities for outdoor recreation; protect and restore wildlife habitat; preserve high quality natural areas; and protect water quality and fish habitat. The program continues until June 30, 2000.

The conservation and recreation goals of the Stewardship Program are achieved by providing funding for land acquisition, habitat restoration, and development of recreational facilities. These funds are available through general obligation borrowing. The state of Wisconsin sells bonds to investors now to raise the funds, then pays back the debt over the next 20 years. This spreads the cost over time so it can be shared with future users of public lands.

Stewardship is administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The Stewardship Advisory Council (SAC), with representatives from nonprofit groups and local units of government, advises the Department on matters relating to the program.

### **Stewardship Grants**

A key component of the Stewardship Program is cooperation and partnership between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, local units of government, and nonprofit conservation organizations (NCOs). To foster this partnership, Stewardship provides 50% match grants to eligible sponsors for qualified projects.

The program recognizes the important role nonprofit groups play in meeting the conservation and recreation needs of Wisconsin residents and is designed to assist groups working to meet those needs. This set of guidelines is for NCOs interested in applying for Stewardship funds to purchase land or easements. Another bulletin, *Stewardship Grants for Habitat Restoration*, describes grants for land management projects that restore wildlife habitat. State Park and Forest Friends groups interested in sponsoring development projects in state parks and forests should refer to *Stewardship Property Development Grants for State Park and Forest Friends Groups*.

There is also a separate booklet for local units of government called *Wisconsin Stewardship - Open Project Selection Process*. For information on obtaining any of these materials, see the section "Getting Help" on page 4.

### **Eligible Applicants**

To be eligible for a Stewardship grant for property acquisition, an organization must be a nonprofit corporation, charitable trust or other nonprofit association as described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. It must also have as part of its mission "the acquisition of property for conservation purposes." This mission should be reflected in the bylaws, charter, or incorporation papers of the organization.

To learn if your organization is eligible, simply supply the Department of Natural Resources with a copy of

your IRS 501(c)(3) determination letter, as well as copies of your Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws.

In addition to these basic eligibility requirements, an NCO must also be able to demonstrate that it has the financial capacity to carry out a project, as well as the ability to maintain and manage property over time. This determination is made when an NCO applies for a grant for a specific project.

### **Program Priorities and Project Eligibility**

The Stewardship Program is actually an umbrella for twelve separate programs, each with its own goals and criteria. Indeed, one of the program's best features is this broadness of scope. It covers a lot of ground, both figuratively and literally, from pristine natural areas to urban gardens. All twelve of the Stewardship programs are summarized on the next page. NCOs are eligible for grants under eight of them. In the appendix, there is a complete description of these eight, including the criteria for each.

The department may award grants for projects that benefit the public and meet the criteria of one or more of these eight programs. Other factors may also be considered. Projects that have regional or statewide significance may receive priority over projects that have a more local focus. A higher priority may also be given to existing projects or large projects, which are being pursued in collaboration with others, where the multiple acquisition of adjacent parcels will provide greater benefit for natural resource conservation than single parcel projects. Sites threatened by development or other conversion of land use may also receive priority.

Finally, there must be a good prospect for success. An organization will not receive funding until there is a sound land management plan that ensures the long-term viability of a project.

### **Eligible Expenses**

Grants cover 50% of the acquisition costs of property. Eligible acquisition costs include the fair market value of the property as determined by Department-approved appraisals and reasonable costs relating to the purchase of the property including the cost of land surveys, appraisals, relocation payments, title evidence, recording fees, interest on installment payments with prior written approval of the department, and the cost of environmental inspections and audits.

Expenses not covered include attorneys fees, environmental clean up costs, brokerage fees paid by the buyer, real estate transfer taxes, or other costs not identified above.

## STEWARDSHIP IN BRIEF

**NCOs may apply for grants under any of the following Stewardship programs :**

- \* **Natural Areas** - preserve Wisconsin's outstanding biotic communities and habitats with rare species and highly significant geological and archaeological sites. \$1.5 million/year. Grants for land and easement acquisition.
- \* **Habitat Areas** - protect and restore wildlife habitat. \$1.5 million/year. Grants for land and easement acquisition and for habitat restoration projects.
- \* **Streambank Protection** - protect surface water quality and fishery habitat by reducing agricultural and urban runoff. \$1 million/year. Grants for land and easement acquisition and fencing.
- \* **State Trails** - provide a comprehensive state trails system with recreational opportunities for hikers, equestrians, bicyclists and cross country skiers. \$1 million/year. Grants for land and easement acquisition.
- \* **Ice Age Trail** - permanently preserve a corridor for the National Scenic Ice Age Trail. \$500,000/year. Grants for land and easement acquisition.
- \* **Urban Green Space** - provide open space and protect scenic, ecological or other natural features in urban areas; provide land for noncommercial gardening. \$750,000 per year. Grants for land acquisition.
- \* **Urban Rivers** - acquire land to protect natural resources and provide recreational opportunities along rivers in cities and villages. \$1.9 million/year. Grants for land acquisition.
- \* **Acquisition and Development of Local Parks** - purchase and develop community parks and local trails for outdoor recreation. \$2.25 million/year. NCOs may apply for grants for land acquisition.

**The following Stewardship Programs do not have grant components:**

- \* **General Land Acquisition** - supports the purchase of land for state parks and forests, wildlife areas, and other DNR projects. \$6.7 million/year.
- \* **Recreational Development** - for maintaining and improving state park facilities and building new recreation facilities. \$3.5 million/year.
- \* **Lower Wisconsin River** - for recreation, scenic beauty, and resource protection; purchase land and easements for the Lower Wisconsin Riverway that extends from Prairie du Sac to Prairie du Chien. \$2 million/year.
- \* **Natural Areas Heritage Match** - matches donations of land or money for natural areas.

## Deadlines

All grant applications must be received no later than one year after a property is purchased by an organization. In practice, most applications are received well before acquisition because an NCO usually needs to know if it is receiving a grant when it plans its funding strategy for a project.

Applications will be considered at any time of the year for projects that qualify under the following programs: *Natural Areas, Habitat Areas, Streambank Protection, State Trails* and *Ice Age Trail*.

Applications must be received by May 1 for *Urban Green Space, Acquisition and Development of Local Parks, and Urban Rivers*. Applications received after May 1 for these programs cannot be considered until the next year.

The deadline for two sister programs are as follows:

*Lake Management Planning Grant Program* - February 1 and August 1

*Lake Management Protection Grant Program* - May 1

For information about these two programs, see below.

## Getting Help

These guidelines are designed to serve as your map through Stewardship and should answer most of your initial questions. In addition, there is a Community Services Specialist (CSS) in each of the five DNR Regions who will walk through the process with you from project conception to issuing the final check. They will explain the requirements of Stewardship, assist you in evaluating project alternatives, bring in other DNR resource people as needed, help you complete the application form and suggest other funding sources if your project does not qualify for Stewardship. They will also determine which of the various Stewardship programs is appropriate for your project. We recommend you review the program criteria, explained in the Appendix, but do not spend a great deal of time trying to determine which is appropriate. The CSS will do that for you. Their names are listed on the next page. We invite you to call your CSS early in the process of project selection and to do it often.

The Department has also prepared several technical assistance bulletins that answer the most commonly asked questions we receive from NCOs. Check with your CSS for a copy of any of these:

- \* *Land Acquisition Guidelines for NCOs* (see Appendix)
- \* *Developing Project Narratives and Land Management Plans* (see Appendix)
- \* *Real Estate Appraisal Guidelines*
- \* *Guide to Financial Aid Programs Administered by the DNR*
- \* *Conservation Easements and DNR Grant Programs*
- \* *Stewardship Grants for Habitat Restoration*
- \* *Stewardship Property Development Grants for State Park and Forest Friends Groups*
- \* *Guidelines and Application Booklet for the Lake Management Planning Grant Program and Lake Management Protection Grant Program*

## **DNR CONTACTS**

### **Northeast Region**

Jeff Pagels  
Community Services Specialist  
1125 North Military Avenue, Box 10448  
Green Bay, WI 54307-0448  
Telephone: (414) 492-5821  
Telefax No.: (414) 492-5913

Counties: Brown, Calumet, Door, Fond du Lac,  
Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette,  
Marquette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie,  
Shawano, Waupaca, Waushara, Winnebago

### **West Central Region**

Karen Blodgett  
Community Services Specialist  
1300 West Clairemont Avenue, Box 4001  
Eau Claire WI 54702-4001  
Telephone: (715) 836-6574  
Telefax No.: (715) 839-6076

Counties: Adams, Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark,  
Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, Juneau, LaCrosse,  
Marathon, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Portage, St.  
Croix, Trempealeau, Vernon, Wood

### **South Central Region**

Stefanie Brouwer  
Community Services Specialist  
3911 Fish Hatchery Road  
Fitchburg WI 53711  
Telephone: (608) 275-3218  
Telefax No.: (608) 275-3338

Counties: Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Dodge,  
Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette,  
Richland, Rock, Sauk

### **Southeast Region**

Dan Kaemmerer  
Community Services Specialist  
2300 N. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Dr.  
Box 12436  
Milwaukee WI 53212  
Telephone: (414) 263-8704  
Telefax No.: (414) 263-8483

Counties: Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine,  
Sheboygan, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha

### **Northern Region**

Pat Zatopa  
Community Services Specialist  
107 Sutliff Ave., Box 818  
Rhineland WI 54501  
Telephone: (715) 365-8928  
Telefax No.: (715) 365-8932

Counties: Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade,  
Lincoln, Oneida, Price, Taylor, Vilas, Ashland,  
Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Polk, Rusk,  
Sawyer, Washburn

### **Central Office**

Janet Beach Hanson  
Grants Manager  
Box 7921  
Madison, WI 53707-7921  
Telephone: (608) 266-0868  
Telefax No.: (608) 267-0496



## SEVEN STEPS TO RECEIVING A GRANT

### Step 1. Contact your CSS

Begin by discussing your project with your CSS who can give you initial feedback on whether or not it is likely to qualify.

The CSS will also explain the Department's land acquisition requirements. Failure to meet these requirements could disqualify an organization from receiving a grant so it is important to have these discussions early. You will also wish to discuss timing. CSS's are responsible for many grant programs and at any given time are working on a number of grant requests. They need to know if you have specific deadlines, such as an expiration date on an option to purchase.

As soon as the Department knows about your proposal, we add it to a statewide list of pending projects. This enables us to track upcoming projects and determine whether funds are adequate to meet the demand.

### Step 2. Decide to apply for a grant

Your Board of Directors should formally adopt a resolution to apply for a grant before an application is submitted. The Board will want to know the terms and conditions of the program before doing so. See the section "Stewardship Conditions" for this information.

The application materials include a form, *Resolution Requesting a Stewardship Grant*, which verifies that the Board has agreed to apply for funding and will abide by the requirements of the program.

### Step 3. Determine the size of your project

A project may include one parcel of land or any number of parcels that are contiguous or in close proximity. Organizations are encouraged to design their projects with ecological boundaries in mind, boundaries that will ensure the permanent protection of the natural values of the site. This often includes more than one parcel of land.

If a group submits a project that encompasses several adjacent parcels, the Department will evaluate all the parcels at one time. Once the size of the project has been approved, an organization can proceed with acquisition of any parcel that falls within the project's boundaries without having to go through the entire grant approval process again. A group may not be able to purchase all of the parcels at one time, but it knows that when one of them becomes available, it will be eligible for funding. Please keep in mind, however, that this does not automatically assure funding. The number of grants awarded in any given year is limited by the amount of money available. If there are more requests than can be accommodated, projects will be ranked and funded according to their ranking.

#### **Step 4. Submit an application**

You will find application materials and instructions beginning on page 14. Completed applications and the required attachments should be mailed to your CSS.

#### **Step 5. Project review**

Projects are evaluated according to how well they meet program criteria. The evaluation is based on information in the application as well as site visits and technical review comments. This is usually an interactive process between Department staff and the applicant with discussions about project scope, boundaries, land management plans, etc. There are actually two phases to the review. The first takes place in the region. Projects are then forwarded, with a regional recommendation, to the DNR Headquarters in Madison where they are compared with other projects from around the state.

There can be no firm commitment from the Department on a grant until an application has been received and approved. Every effort is made to provide a decision on a grant within six weeks of receiving an application. This may vary somewhat depending on the time of year, the completeness of the application, and workload. If you have a deadline, the Department will attempt to expedite the evaluation and provide a quicker decision. This is often possible, but not always.

The more complete the application, the more quickly it can be processed. The season of the year may also have a bearing on the time needed because it is often necessary to inventory plant and animal communities. This may not be possible in winter months. Therefore we recommend you submit applications in the spring or early summer whenever possible.

There may be considerable competition for available funds. If more eligible projects have been submitted than the Department is able to fund, the projects will be rated and ranked. Because the *Urban Green Space*, *Urban Rivers*, and *Acquisition and Development of Local Parks* programs are always oversubscribed, applications for these programs are always rated and ranked. This occurs once a year during the Open Project Selection Process in late June.

Any eligible project which is not funded in one year due to lack of funds will automatically be reconsidered the following year.

The final step in the Department's approval process is fulfilling the requirements of the Wisconsin Environmental Protection Act (WEPA). Stewardship grants are a matter of public record and WEPA provides the public an opportunity to comment on projects being funded with state dollars. WEPA requirements vary depending upon the type and size of a project. Typically, it involves the issuance of a public notice or press release and a two- week public comment period.

If a grant request exceeds \$250,000, the project also needs the approval of the Joint Finance Committee of the Legislature.

Your CSS will keep you informed of the status of your application, and you will receive written notification once a decision has been reached on a grant.

## **Step 6. Sign the Grant and Management Contract**

After WEPA has been completed and the project approved, the Department will issue a Grant and Management Contract that outlines the conditions of the grant. This document defines the state's interest in the property and summarizes the Land Management Plan describing how the land will be managed to preserve its natural and recreational values. You will have developed this plan as part of the application. The Department may recommend changes during its review.

When you receive copies of the grant contract, you will also receive accounting guidelines and reimbursement claim forms to assist you in assembling the cost documentation you need to receive payment of the grant amount. At this time, the Department will also send out a press release announcing the grant award.

After the grant contract has been signed by the NCO, funds are encumbered and held for the project.

## **Step 7. Submit remaining documentation**

At this point, the NCO submits any items listed on the application checklist that have not already been sent to their CSS, including the reimbursement claim forms. Once the Department has approved these items and the Grant and Management Contract has been recorded in the Register of Deeds' office, the project file will be forwarded to the Bureau of Finance for auditing and payment.

NCOs have the option of receiving their check at the time of the closing on a property or afterward as a reimbursement. The process varies slightly depending on which option you choose. You and your CSS can work out these details.

If you discover your project costs exceed the estimated amount encumbered in the grant contract, you may request an amendment to increase the amount of the grant. The Department may be able to increase the grant amount, but it will depend on whether or not additional funds are available.

## STEWARDSHIP CONDITIONS

When an NCO signs a Grant and Management Contract accepting Stewardship funds, it assumes responsibility for complying with program requirements. These requirements are spelled out in the grant contract and in Chapter 51 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code. The provisions of the Administrative Code have the force and effect of state law. All obligations, terms, conditions, and restrictions of the grant contract are limitations on the use of the property in perpetuity.

Below is a list of the major conditions of the Stewardship Program.

1. **Land Management Plan.** Property acquired with a Stewardship grant may not be converted to any use other than that specified in the grant contract and a Land Management Plan without the prior written approval of the Department.
2. **Public Access.** Property may not be closed to the public unless the Department determines it is necessary to protect plants, wild animals, or other natural features, or unless the NCO is purchasing an easement and the right of public access is not being purchased with the easement. An NCO may not discriminate against any person or group in the use and enjoyment of the property.

There may be some restrictions on the type of public access, such as prohibition of motorized vehicles. Such restrictions are included in the Land Management Plan.

3. **Reversionary rights.** If an NCO violates any essential condition of the grant contract and fails to correct it within 6 months after written notification, all title, right, and interest in the property held by the NCO shall vest in the state. In the event the NCO dissolves, the property shall revert to the Department unless it approves transfer to another NCO or governmental agency.
4. **Conveyance of property or property rights.** An NCO may not convey any interest in the property to a third party nor allow any leases, permits, or encumbrances without the prior written approval of the Department. If necessary, the Department could take action to avoid the placement of liens, judgments, or encumbrances against the property.
5. **501(c)(3) status.** The NCO must maintain its 501(c)(3) tax exempt status and inform the Department of any changes or challenges to that status.
6. **Property taxes.** The NCO is responsible for paying property taxes on time unless property taxes are not required.
7. **Compliance with laws.** An NCO must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal statutes, regulations, administrative rules, and ordinances in fulfilling the terms and conditions of the grant contract, including but not limited to general and special zoning, land use permit requirements, accessibility for people with disabilities, environmental quality, and historical and archaeological preservation.
8. **Signage.** The Department's assistance in acquiring land or interests in land shall be acknowledged by placement of signs or in another manner approved by the Department.

9. **Income from the property.** Income accruing to the property must be used to further the objectives of the project as stated in the grant contract. Reasonable entrance, service, or user's fees may be charged to defray operation and maintenance costs.
10. **Natural Areas dedication.** If an NCO is awarded a grant through the Natural Areas program, the property shall be dedicated as a State Natural Area under ss. 23.27 and 23.29, Wis. Stats., unless the Department exempts the property.
11. **Department access.** The Department reserves the right of access to the property to monitor compliance with the grant contract or carry out management activity necessary to ensure the public's rights and safety; however, the NCO is responsible for inspection, management, and maintenance of the property.

## COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### **Who acquires the property and who holds title to the land once it is acquired?**

The NCO both purchases the property and holds title to it. If the NCO wishes to transfer title to a third party, such as a local unit of government, it will need permission from the Department of Natural Resources to do so. This permission is granted through a legal document called an "Assignment of Stewardship Responsibilities."

### **What can we use as sponsor match?**

Sponsor match is the 50% of the acquisition costs not funded by the state. Eligible sources of sponsor match include:

- a. Cash from the project sponsor
- b. Cash donated by a third party
- c. Funds from a local unit of government or the federal government
- d. Property contributions from a third party if the contribution was made within 3 years prior to the acquisition
- e. Property acquired by the applicant within 3 years prior to the acquisition if the property was not purchased with state funds
- f. Property value donated by the property owner (as in a bargain sale).

Funds from other state programs cannot be used as sponsor match, nor can the development or maintenance costs of the project.

Using the value of donated property as sponsor match (options d, e, and f above) instead of cash is an excellent way for NCOs to reduce the amount of cash they need to raise for a project. The NCO retains title to the donated property, but the property becomes part of the Stewardship Program.

There are some limitations on using property donations for sponsor match:

- a. The donated property must meet the criteria of the same Stewardship program as the parcel being acquired. For instance, if an NCO is receiving a grant under the Natural Areas program to purchase a parcel of land, any property the NCO uses for sponsor match must also qualify for the Natural Areas program.
- b. The NCO cannot receive more in grant funds than the amount of cash it actually needs for the purchase. If the value of the donated property is more than the amount of cash needed for the purchase, then any residual value from the donation which is left over may be used in subsequent applications if they are submitted in the same fiscal year or the next one.
- c. The value of the donated property is determined by an appraisal that meets DNR standards.
- d. All donated property used as sponsor match is covered by the grant contract and thus is subject to the same Stewardship conditions as the purchased property.

The rules surrounding property donations can be confusing at first glance and you will want to discuss your particular situation with your CSS. Here's an example which might help you understand this concept:

*An NCO purchases a piece of land for \$8,000, but the land is appraised at \$12,000. The landowner has donated \$4,000 in property value to the NCO. This is called a "bargain sale." The Stewardship grant is based on appraised value, not purchase price, so the grant amount would be \$6,000 which is 50% of the appraised value of the property. The sponsor match would be \$2,000 in cash from the NCO plus \$4,000 in property value which was donated by the landowner.*

*To further complicate matters, let's assume the NCO wants to use another parcel of land which was donated to it as part of its sponsor match. The appraised value of the donated parcel is \$20,000. Assuming both properties qualify for the Natural Areas program, here's how the grant amount would be calculated: the total appraised value of the two properties is \$32,000 (\$20,000 for the donated parcel and \$12,000 for the purchased parcel). The state match would normally be \$16,000 which is 50% of the combined appraised value of the two properties. But because only \$8,000 was actually spent to purchase the land, and since a grant in excess of that amount would constitute a profit to the NCO, the state share is reduced to \$8,000. The remaining \$8,000 in donated property value may be used by the NCO in subsequent applications in that fiscal year or the next.*

### **What can we do to increase our chance of receiving a grant?**

1. We recommend organizations put together a team or advisory committee to assess potential project sites in their area, prioritize those sites, and then concentrate on their priorities. By doing so, they will choose the best projects in their region, and these projects will be more likely to receive funding than marginal ones.

Valuable team members will be individuals with a resource management background (biologists and ecologists; county conservationists; local park managers; University or U.W. Extension biologists, foresters or ecologists; DNR resource managers; landscape architects, etc.). They are usually familiar with local resources, have the skills needed to do site assessments of natural features, and can help with development of land management plans.

DNR staff will also be pleased to meet with your group to discuss resource protection goals and priorities in your region.

2. Collaborate with others and tie your projects to other resource protection efforts taking place in your area. These might include greenway or open space plans; river corridors; priority watershed plans; trail systems; national or state programs to preserve specific types of habitat or species of plants and animals, such as migrating waterfowl or Karner Blue butterflies.
3. Write a sound project narrative and land management plan.

### **What can we do to expedite the application process?**

1. Follow the Application Checklist and Instructions on page 16, and send us the required items as soon as possible.

2. Order your appraisal as soon as feasible and use an appraiser who is familiar with DNR appraisal standards. Getting an appraisal can be a lengthy and time consuming process. Appraisals that do not meet DNR standards will either have to be amended or redone. Your CSS will give you a list of experienced appraisers in your area.
3. Send us a copy of your title commitment as soon as you have it. The DNR Stewardship attorney reviews all title insurance policies or title commitments for NCO grants. Any title problems will have to be resolved before we can release a check.

**Can we receive a grant for land we are purchasing with a mortgage or land contract?**

No, the Department is not able to subordinate the state's interests to the prior interests of a mortgage holder; therefore we cannot award a grant for property on which you have a mortgage or land contract. NCOs have on occasion transferred a mortgage to another property they own that is not under the Stewardship program or to a portion of the Stewardship property not covered by the grant.

If you have the funds needed for sponsor match, but are working with a landowner who wishes to extend payment over several years for tax reasons, it is possible to arrange scheduled payments through an escrow account.

Discuss these possibilities with your CSS.



**KNOWLES-NELSON STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM**  
**APPLICATION FOR NONPROFIT CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS**

State of Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Form 8700-259 1-97

Notes:

1. Use of this form is required by the Department of Natural Resources to apply for a grant for property acquisition pursuant to s. NR 51, Wis. Adm. Code. Personally identifiable information is not intended to be used for any other purpose other than possible consideration for other grant programs.
2. Please send your completed application form with supporting materials listed on the Application Checklist to the Community Services Specialist in your local DNR Regional Office.

Project name	Project location ( <i>county</i> )
Project type _____ Land acquisition _____ Easement acquisition	Number of acres
Name and address of organization	Name and title of contact person
	Telephone number ( <i>including area code</i> )

Does this project implement a recommendation contained in an approved Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, a land use plan, the National Heritage Inventory, or another type of comprehensive plan? If yes, indicate name of the plan.

Status of negotiations with landowner (*check one*):

- \_\_\_\_\_ Discussions are underway with the landowner.  
\_\_\_\_\_ An option has been signed.  
\_\_\_\_\_ An offer to purchase has been signed.  
\_\_\_\_\_ An easement has been signed.  
\_\_\_\_\_ The property has been purchased.

Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Expected closing date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of transfer of title: \_\_\_\_\_

Has your organization changed its mission in its Bylaws or Articles of Incorporation since it was certified as eligible for the Stewardship Program? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

Is your organization a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

I certify that the information in this application and supporting materials is true and correct and in conformity with applicable Wisconsin Statutes.

Name	Title
Signature	Date

## BUDGET WORKSHEET

1. Estimate of acquisition costs as defined in NR 51.002(1):

Appraised value of the property \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(Indicate if this is only an estimate)

Miscellaneous associated costs

Appraisal(s) \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Title insurance \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Survey \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Environmental inspection/audit \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Recording fees \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Relocation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Estimate of total acquisition costs \$ \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your actual purchase price for the property? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

3. Funding sources (list sources of sponsor match):

Sponsoring NCO \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Other organizations or third parties \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Local or federal government \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Property contribution from the landowner \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Other contribution of property \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

4. Amount of cash award requested \$ \_\_\_\_\_

5. Estimate of annual maintenance expenses \$ \_\_\_\_\_

6. Estimate of development or habitat restoration costs, if applicable \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## APPLICATION CHECKLIST AND INSTRUCTIONS

This checklist includes all materials required for a Stewardship grant for property acquisition. Typically the various parts are submitted at different points in the grant process. The Department needs Items 1-7 and 14-21 before it can make a decision on funding a project. Appraisal(s) may be submitted either before or after a project has tentatively been approved, although in the most competitive programs, there is a distinct advantage to submitting the appraisal with the application and before projects are rated and ranked.

The Department cannot authorize payment of a grant until all materials have been received and approved. Keep this checklist and use it to track your progress in submitting the required information.

### PROJECT INFORMATION

☐ 1. **Application form**

☐ 2. **Project narrative and proposed management plan**

The project narrative is used to evaluate, rate and rank projects. A complete, concise narrative will improve your chances for receiving a grant. Please follow the format contained in *Developing Project Narratives and Land Management Plans* (see Appendix C).

*Note: If this application is for acquisition of a parcel of land which is within the boundaries of a Stewardship project which has already been approved, you may skip this section as well as 3 a, c and d, and #4. If the application proposes to expand the boundaries of an existing Stewardship project, you may explain the reason for the expansion rather than redoing the entire narrative.*

☐ 3. **Project maps showing location and boundaries of project**

- a. County map
- b. Plat map
- c. Topographic map
- d. Aerial photograph
- e. Site development map

Do a simple site development map for the property which shows existing or planned buildings, parking areas and other improvements; utility lines; natural communities or vegetation types; easements of record; habitat restoration areas; and archeological sites. (If the property is vacant and you do not intend to do any restoration work or development, you may skip 3e.)

☐ 4. **Community support, partnerships and linkages**

- a. Describe any contacts you have had with local units of government or others about the proposed project, including support and opposition.
- b. List other organizations or governmental agencies involved in the project and explain their roles. Also indicate if you plan to transfer title to a third party.
- c. Is your project part of or will it complement other land conservation projects in the area?

☐ 5. **Property data**

- a. Name of property owner
- b. Legal description of property covered by the grant
- c. Relocation. Indicate if relocation is applicable. (You may need to prepare a relocation plan and pay relocation benefits if the acquisition displaces a tenant.) (See Appendix B)
- d. Encumbrances - if the property currently is or will be encumbered by any easements, liens, deed restrictions or special agreements with the landowner, please describe.
- e. Property description

*Note: If you included a description of the property in the project narrative, you may skip 5.e. However, if the property is part of a larger project which contains a number of parcels, and therefore was not specifically described in the narrative, please describe the parcel and its importance to the overall project. Include a physical description, number of acres, unique features and current usage. If you intend to employ any land management practices different from those contained in the project management plan, also discuss those.*

- ☐ 6.       **Real estate appraisal(s)** (two appraisals are required if the parcel is over \$200,000)
- ☐ 7.       **Environmental Hazards Assessment form** (Form #1800-1) (see Appendix B)
- ☐ 8.       **Offer to Purchase** (or other evidence of landowner notification) (see Appendix B)
- ☐ 9.       **Title Insurance Policy** (or Title Commitment if the policy has not been issued yet)
- ☐ 10.      **Warranty Deed**
- ☐ 11.      **A copy of easement document** (for easements only)
- ☐ 12.      **A copy of the recorded Grant and Management Contract**
- ☐ 13.      **Reimbursement claim forms and supporting materials**
  - a.   DNR Forms 8700-11 and 8700-13
  - b.   Invoices/vouchers for eligible expenses
  - c.   Closing statement

#### **ORGANIZATION INFORMATION**

- ☐ 14.      **Board resolution authorizing this application** (see sample form on page 18)
- ☐ 15.      **Board of Directors.** Names, addresses, telephone numbers of current Board members (designate officers)
- ☐ 16.      **Financial status.** Copy of most recent audited financial statement or most recent 990 filing to the IRS (If you do not have either of these documents, talk to your CSS.)

*Note: If this is the organization's first application to the Stewardship Program, please provide the following information. If you have already done so, you may skip Items 17-21.*

- ☐ 17. **Organization description.** Briefly describe the history, purpose and activities of the organization, including number of members and any affiliation with a national or statewide organization. Your description should also include information about your organization's experience in undertaking and completing land management projects and a description of any lands you already own.
- ☐ 18. **Articles of Incorporation**
- ☐ 19. **Bylaws**
- ☐ 20. **501(c)(3) determination letter from the IRS**
- ☐ 21. **Miscellaneous.** Brochures about organization, newsletter, annual report, copy of any land acquisition policies, criteria for evaluation of land, or other pertinent information.

**RESOLUTION  
REQUESTING A STEWARDSHIP GRANT**

RESOLVED, that the \_\_\_\_\_  
(Board of Directors or other authorized governing unit)

of the \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of organization)

headquartered at \_\_\_\_\_

HEREBY AUTHORIZES \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name and title)

to act on its behalf to submit an application to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for financial assistance under the Stewardship Program for the acquisition of property or for other qualified projects for conservation purposes; to sign documents; and to take action necessary to undertake, direct, and complete an approved Stewardship project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of organization)

recognizes and acknowledges the long-term ownership and management responsibilities of the Stewardship Program, and will comply with all Stewardship laws and regulations and will meet its obligations under the Grant and Management Contract for the project.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19 \_\_\_\_\_.

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was duly adopted by

\_\_\_\_\_ at a legal meeting held  
(Name of organization)

on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 19 \_\_\_\_\_.

Authorized signature \_\_\_\_\_

Typed or printed name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX A**  
**STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM CRITERIA**

Natural Areas .....	A-2
Habitat Areas .....	A-4
Streambank Protection .....	A-6
State Trails and Ice Age Trail .....	A-8
Urban Green Space .....	A-10
Acquisition and Development of Local Parks .....	A-12
Urban Rivers .....	A-16

## **THE NATURAL AREAS PROGRAM**

### **Program Objectives**

Many of the plant and animal communities that evolved following the melting of the last glaciers about 12,000 years ago have been displaced or lost. Places which have escaped most if not all disturbance are often the last refuges in the state for rare and endangered plants and animals. The Natural Areas Program (NA) is dedicated to the preservation of these high quality native communities.

State Natural Areas are set aside for preservation of their natural values for future generations, scientific research, and teaching conservation and natural history. They are not intended for intensive recreational use such as picnicking or camping.

The Stewardship Program provides \$1.5 million each year to purchase high priority sites to help fill gaps in the Natural Areas system. Another \$500,000 is available through the Wisconsin Natural Heritage Match Grant Program. Under this program, private donations of land, easements, or money to the Natural Areas Program are matched dollar-for-dollar with state funds up to \$500,000 per year, increasing the state Natural Areas budget by that amount. It's an opportunity for property owners and others to become directly involved in the preservation of critically important natural areas.

A minimum of \$250,000 annually is allocated for grants to NCOs for acquisition of land that is of natural area quality. Additional funds up to \$1,250,000 may be available depending on the number of project applications submitted and the availability of funds.

The Land Management Plan for a Natural Areas project must ensure the permanent protection of the natural communities on the property. Staff in the Bureau of Endangered Resources will assist NCOs in developing their plans.

### **The Natural Heritage Inventory**

The Natural Heritage Inventory was established in 1985 by the DNR in cooperation with The Nature Conservancy to provide an on-going, up-to-date storehouse of ecological information. Data is collected during on-site resource surveys and then catalogued into an integrated system of maps, computer databases, and paper files. The Inventory contains the location and biological status of each natural community and rare species that has been evaluated. It also ranks communities and species according to how rare they are in Wisconsin and worldwide. Analysis of a site for inclusion in the Natural Areas Program begins with the information furnished by the Inventory.

### **Property Dedication**

Articles of Dedication provide the strongest long-term legal protection for Natural Areas in the state. Legally-dedicated sites are protected in perpetuity as State Natural Areas and may not be taken for other uses without a finding of urgent and greater public need by the governor and both houses of the legislature.



Property purchased with Natural Areas grants will be "dedicated" as a State Natural Area in most cases. The Department may, on rare occasions and for good cause, exempt a site from the dedication requirement. Good cause includes, but is not limited to, sites that have previous deed restrictions or sites with ephemeral natural values such as rookeries and bird concentration areas.

### **Grant Criteria**

The DNR maintains a priority list of potential Natural Areas sites that is updated regularly. If a project is on the list, it automatically qualifies for a Natural Areas grant.

The following criteria are used to evaluate the natural values of proposed projects which are not on the priority list:

1. The quality of the natural value to be protected.
2. The condition of the natural value to be protected, including an analysis of the degree to which the natural value has been damaged or altered from its optimal condition and character.
3. The long-term viability of the natural value to be protected, including the extent to which the project meets the minimum area required by area-dependent species of concern; the adequacy of the project to maintain community function and dynamics; the impacts that fragmentation, isolation, and size of community may have on its longevity; and the ability of the project to support minimum viable populations of species to be protected.
4. The defensibility of the natural value and the project from adverse effects that threaten it.

Additional criteria used to evaluate and rank proposed projects are as follows:

1. The rarity of the natural value to be protected.
2. The number of natural values to be protected.
3. The degree to which the natural value and the project are threatened and the degree to which they are already protected.
4. The value of the area for research and education.
5. The degree to which acquisition, as opposed to other protection tools, will protect the natural value.
6. The degree to which this type of natural value is already protected in the state.

## THE HABITAT AREAS PROGRAM

### Program Objectives

The purpose of the Habitat Areas Program (HA) is to protect, restore, and enhance wildlife habitat in Wisconsin in order to expand opportunities for wildlife-based recreation such as hunting, bird watching, fishing, nature appreciation, and viewing of game and nongame species. The goals of the program are achieved through the use of easements, land acquisition, cost share agreements with landowners for the restoration of habitat, and establishment of large landscape-scale habitat restoration areas.

Stewardship provides \$1.5 million each year to accomplish the goals of this program. Of this amount, \$750,000 is available to NCOs through grants. The remainder is used by the Department of Natural Resources to purchase and restore wildlife habitat within established wildlife restoration areas.

### Grant Criteria

HA grants are available to NCOs for the following activities:

1. To purchase land or acquire easements on land that furthers the objectives of the program.
2. To install approved land management practices on property owned by the NCO.\*
3. To enter into cost share agreements with landowners to install approved land management practices on the landowner's property.\*

Priority shall be given to projects that have one or more of the following characteristics, not listed in priority order:

1. Projects that protect, enhance, or restore ecologically-significant plant and wildlife communities, biological diversity, unique or outstanding ecosystems, or rare wildlife and plant species.
2. Sites identified as regionally important for wildlife and plants in a comprehensive land use plan or the Natural Heritage Inventory.

Projects not eligible to receive grants include:

1. Property containing or planned to contain buildings or other facilities designed for intensive recreational use such as playgrounds, roads, picnic areas, boating and camping facilities, playing fields or shelters, unless the facility occupies only a small portion of the property and the Department determines it does not diminish the property's wildlife habitat value.
2. Timber plantations.
3. Property intended for agricultural use.
4. Licensed game farms, fur farms, deer farms, or shooting preserves.

\*See the bulletin *Stewardship Grants for Habitat Restoration*

## Project Evaluation

Below is a list of the questions used by Department resource managers when evaluating projects for the Habitat Areas Program. The questions incorporate the criteria above plus other priorities listed on page 2.

1. Will this project provide wildlife or fish habitat? Please attach a written evaluation of the project in terms of the wildlife habitat which would be protected, enhanced or restored, based on your review of the application and a site visit.
2. Does this property protect or restore habitat containing ecologically significant plant and wildlife communities, unique or outstanding ecosystems, rare wildlife and plant species or biological diversity? If yes, please describe in your written evaluation.
3. Does this project implement a recommendation contained in a land use plan or protect property identified in the Natural Heritage Inventory?  
If yes, please list the plan.
4. Does this project have statewide or regional significance or is this primarily a local project?
5. Does this property complement or is it linked to a larger project of either this organization, another organization or a state or local unit of government? If yes, please explain.
6. Is this project being pursued in collaboration with others? If so, list the partners.
7. Is this site threatened by development or other conversion of land use?  
If yes, how has the threat been documented?
8. Has the organization provided a sound land management plan which ensures the long-term viability of the project or do we need to work with the group to develop or refine the plan?
9. Does the management plan include provisions for any of the following activities (which are not permitted under this program):
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Construction of buildings or other facilities designed for intensive recreational use such as playgrounds, roads, picnic areas, boating and camping facilities, playing fields or shelters
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Timber plantation
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Agricultural use
  - \_\_\_\_\_ Licensed game farm, fur farm, deer farm or shooting preserve

## **THE STREAMBANK PROTECTION PROGRAM**

### **Program Objective**

The purpose of the Streambank Protection Program is to protect the water quality and fish habitat of Wisconsin streams by establishing "filter strips" along selected streams. Whenever possible, these filter strips should be at least 66 feet from either side of the stream and at least 66 feet beyond riparian wetlands.

Under the program, the Department, local units of government, and NCOs may acquire land or easements adjacent to approved streams. There is \$1 million available each year for the program. Of that amount, \$500,000 is set aside for grants to NCOs and local units of government.

In addition to acquisition of land and easements, the program may also cover the cost of fencing necessary to protect streams on which easements have been acquired, if the Department agrees fencing is necessary.

### **Management Requirements**

The following activities are prohibited on land and easements acquired unless specifically approved by the Department in the Management Plan:

1. Alteration of vegetative cover or other natural features. An exception may be made when necessary to reestablish native grasses or protect vegetative cover deemed essential to prevent erosion.
2. Planting or production of agricultural crops. An exception may be made when necessary for management of resident wildlife species (i.e. food patches, nesting cover).
3. Mowing, or spraying with chemicals. An exception may be made when necessary to control certain noxious weeds or to control pests on an emergency basis when such control is necessary to protect public health.

The Land Management Plan for property acquired under this program may require the landowner to plant trees or seed at seeding rates determined by the Department to establish and maintain perennial cover.

The Department may allow installation and maintenance of management practices meeting USDA soil conservation service standards, such as cattle stream crossings, riprap and cattle watering areas, if the management practice does not conflict with the purpose of the easement.

Public access is not always required with a streambank easement, although it may be a condition of the grant if public use does not conflict with the purpose of the easement.

### **Grant Criteria**

An NCO should begin by discussing a proposed streambank project with their CSS. The CSS will bring

into the discussion the appropriate regional water resource staff to determine what efforts have been made or are being made on the stream, and whether or not the project meets the criteria of the program.

The department will evaluate NCO streambank projects based on the following criteria not listed in order of priority:

1. The extent to which the water quality and fish habitat of the stream are threatened by urban or agricultural runoff. Streams must satisfy this criterion to a reasonable extent to be considered further.
2. The extent to which the threat to the water quality and fish habitat of the stream can be protected through the acquisition of land rights. Streams shall satisfy this criterion to a reasonable extent to be considered further.

Streams satisfying the above criteria shall be further prioritized based on the following:

1. The extent to which the streambank project provides protection of endangered or threatened resources including natural communities and habitat for rare species.
2. The inclusion of the stream in or adjacent to other projects.
3. A determination that the stream's riparian lands are enrolled in a federal or state program that protects water quality or fish habitat including the Conservation Reserve Program, the Erosion Control Planning Program, a soil and water conservation plan, the Soil and Water Resource Management Program and the Nonpoint Source Pollution Abatement Grant Program.

## **THE STATE TRAILS PROGRAM**

### **Program Objectives**

The goal of the State Trails Program is to establish a balanced system of state trails for use by hikers, equestrians, bicyclists, and cross-country skiers. Trails that qualify as State trails are:

1. Near urban areas or near or within scenic, historic, or culturally significant areas
2. Likely to receive significant use
3. Of more than local significance.

Existing state trails include the Ahnapee, "400," Bearskin, Buffalo River, Chippewa Falls/Ambridge, Chippewa River, Elroy-Sparta, Glacial Drumlin, Great River, Green Bay/Greenleaf, Green Bay/Wausau, Green Circle, Hillsboro, La Crosse River, Military Ridge, Pocatonia, Red Cedar, Saunders, Sugar River, Gandy Dancer, Old Abe, Tuscobia, Wiouwash, and Wild Goose. The National Scenic Ice Age Trail and the North Country Trail are also designated as state trails.

Stewardship provides \$1 million annually to develop new state trails, link existing trails, and develop existing routes. An additional \$500,000 per year has been designated for the Ice Age Trail, a National Scenic Trail that when complete will extend 1,000 miles from Interstate State Park in St. Croix Falls to Potawatomi State Park in Sturgeon Bay.

### **NCO Participation in the State Trails Program**

The Department is interested in entering partnership agreements with NCOs and local units of government for the development, administration, and management of state trails.

Stewardship grants are awarded to NCOs for acquisition of land or easements for trails designated as state trails by either the Legislature or Department. Grants may also be awarded for the acquisition of scenic easements on lands within state trail acquisition areas.

NCOs and local units of government may nominate additional trails for state trail designation. Nominations shall document that nominated trails meet the purposes of the program and provide recreational opportunities for equestrians, bicyclists, cross country skiers, or hikers. The trail must also:

1. Be reasonably accessible to urban areas, or within or in close proximity to areas of significant natural beauty, historical, or cultural significance, state or national parks, forests or recreational areas, or provide connections to existing state trails, and
2. Be of a width sufficient to provide the purposes for which acquired, generally not less than 33 feet wide in rural areas and not less than 10 feet wide in urban areas, nor have more than 25 acres per mile averaged over a 5-mile distance.
3. Be likely to receive significant use as determined by the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, or similar study, and

4. Have a reasonable expectation of being completed and of successful management and operation.

The Department shall give higher priority to trails that:

1. Provide connections between other state trails
2. Are of a length sufficient to provide at least one day's recreational experience
3. Provide connections to resource areas of statewide significance or areas of outstanding natural scenery
4. Provide for more than one use
5. Contribute to a geographically balanced system of trails.

## **URBAN GREEN SPACE PROGRAM**

### **Program Objective**

The intent of the Urban Green Space Program (UGS) is to provide open natural space within or in proximity to urban areas; to protect from urban development areas that have scenic, ecological or other natural value and are within or in proximity to urban areas; and to provide land for noncommercial gardening for the residents of an urbanized area.

There is \$750,000 available in the program each year; \$75,000 is earmarked for projects that provide land for noncommercial gardening. If there are not enough gardening projects to utilize the \$75,000, then those dollars revert back to the general UGS program.

UGS provides grants to NCOs, as well as cities, villages, towns, counties, and public inland lake protection and rehabilitation districts.

The deadline for receipt of applications for this program is May 1. Applications received after this date cannot be considered until the following year.

### **Grant Criteria**

This is a very competitive program, and as with the next two programs, it has been necessary to develop a comprehensive rating and ranking system to evaluate projects. Those projects which receive the highest scores will receive funding. For additional information on the rating and ranking system and on specific questions, check with your CSS.

Below is a list of the questions that are considered in the rating and ranking process:

1. Will the project provide for acquisition of lands that are threatened by development? (2 points)
2. Will the project provide for acquisition of an abandoned rail corridor for trail use? (2 points)
3. Will the project acquire land for aquatic habitat protection for fish and wildlife? (2 points)
4. Will the project acquire new park and recreational lands in urban centers for day recreation such as relaxing, hiking picnicking, sports, trail uses, and water uses? (1 point) (To receive a point, the project must acquire land for non-intensive use in communities over 20,000 population or counties over 40,000 population - 10/10/94 DOA estimates.)
5. If the sponsor is a government agency, does it have a park land dedication ordinance? (NCOs will receive 1 point)
6. Will the project acquire land to complete the Ice Age or North Country National Scenic Trail? (1 point)
7. Will the project acquire a parkway, trail or environmental corridor linking existing urban or suburban parks or state and multi-county trails to one another or to a city center, campground or other recreational site? (1 point)
8. Will the project improve river recreation in urban areas through land acquisition? (1 point) (To receive a point, the project must acquire land for non-intensive use in communities over 20,000 population or counties over 40,000 population - 10/10/94 DOA estimates.)



9. Does the master plan for the property call for managing vegetation and fauna on recreational lands to provide as great a statewide diversity of native species as possible? (1 point)
10. Will the project provide for acquisition of wetlands defined in the Wisconsin Wetland Inventory? (1 point)
11. Will the project preserve land which has been identified as a preservation priority by the Natural Heritage Inventory? (1 point)
12. Is the land accessible, where accessibility is appropriate? (1 point)
13. Are interpretive facilities provided where they are appropriate? (1 point)
14. Does the land provide or begin a linear corridor? (1 point)
15. Does the land connect to or add to an existing corridor? (1 point)
16. Does the land provide water frontage? (1 point)
17. Does the project restore wetlands? (1 point)
18. Is the primary purpose for the land passive recreation? (1 point)
19. Is the project located in a county that has a city with a population of 50,000 or more? (1 point)
20. Is the project located in a county with a population estimated as of 1/1/96 of:  
200,000-500,000 - 1 point  
Exceeds 500,000 - 2 points?
21. Is the project located in a county where the population growth rate exceeds 4.75 percent and the total population exceeds 50,000? (1 point)
22. Does the land provide or create an open natural space? (1 point)
23. Is the land of regional or statewide significance? (1 point)
24. Does the project involve the acquisition of land where the appraisal is complete? (1 point)
25. Does the project involve acquisition of land where the appraisal is complete and the sponsor has completed an option or offer to purchase agreement? (3 points)
26. Does the project continue an eligible acquisition project previously started? (1 point)
27. Does the project implement master plans of two or more units of government? (1 point)
28. Active project adjustment: For each active, incomplete project that the Sponsor has under the Stewardship Program, points will be deducted as follows: one active project-1 point; two active projects-3 points; 3 or more active projects-5 points.

## **ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL PARKS**

### **Program Objectives**

Stewardship sets aside \$2.25 million each year to improve community parks and acquire land for public outdoor recreation. Funds are available to towns, villages, cities, counties, Indian tribes and NCOs.

Funds are allocated on a Department regional allocation system with 70% distributed on the basis of each county's proportionate share of the state population and 30% distributed equally to each county.

Funds may be used for both land acquisition projects and development projects, such as fishing piers, picnic facilities, trails and playgrounds. Costs associated with operation and maintenance of parks and other outdoor recreation facilities are not eligible for Stewardship funds. NCOs may only apply for funds for land acquisition; they are not eligible for funds for development projects.

The deadline for receipt of applications for this program is May 1. Applications received after this date cannot be considered until the following year.

### **Grant Criteria**

This is another very competitive program, and as with the last two a comprehensive ranking system has been developed to evaluate projects.

Eligible types of projects for land acquisition include:

1. Areas with frontage on rivers, streams, lakes, estuaries and reservoirs that will provide water-based public outdoor recreation opportunities.
2. Areas that provide special recreation opportunities, such as floodplains, wetlands and areas adjacent to scenic highways.
3. Natural areas and preserves and outstanding scenic areas where the objective is to preserve the scenic or natural values, including areas of physical or biological importance and wildlife areas. These areas shall be open to the general public for outdoor recreation use to the extent that the natural attributes of the areas will not be seriously impaired or lost.
4. Land for day-use picnic areas, neighborhood playgrounds and tot lots, areas adjacent to school playgrounds and competitive nonprofessional sports facilities.
5. Land for recreational trails.

Ineligible acquisition projects include:

1. Acquisition of land through the use of condemnation.
2. Acquisition of areas devoted primarily to indoor recreation, historic purposes or amusement facilities.
3. Acquisition of land for golf courses, marinas and downhill ski areas.

Below is a list of the questions used in rating and ranking projects. Those projects which receive the highest scores will receive funding. For additional information on the rating and ranking system and on specific questions, check with your CSS.

1. Is the project specifically identified in a local Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP)? (1 point)
2. Does the project provide for the acquisition of land that meets a need identified in a CORP? (1 point)
3. Does the project implement a recommendation contained in a regional plan of another unit of government? (1 point)
4. At what level of priority does the project satisfy a priority need for the region as identified in a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) analysis ? (high priority=2 points; medium priority=1 point)
5. Does the project satisfy a priority need for the state aggregate priorities as identified in the SCORP needs analysis? (high=2 points; medium=1 point)
6. Will the project provide for acquisition of lands that are threatened by development? (2 points)
7. Will the project provide for acquisition of an abandoned rail corridor for trail use? (2 points)
8. Will the project provide for aquatic habitat protection or improve aquatic habitat protection or improve aquatic habitat for fish and wildlife? (2 points)
9. Will the project acquire new park and recreational lands (a community's first park or a park in an area that isn't served by a park)? (3 points)
10. Does the unit of government where the project is located have a parkland dedication ordinance? (2 points to NCOs)
11. Will the project help complete the Ice Age Trail or North Country Scenic Trail? (2 points)
12. Does the project acquire or develop a parkway, trail or environmental corridor linking existing urban or suburban parks or state and multi-county trails? (2 points)
13. Will the project provide for acquisition of land contiguous to existing parkland? (2 points)
14. Will the project provide for the acquisition of wetlands? (1 point)
15. Will the project improve river recreation? (1 point)
16. Will the project acquire land for quiet, low impact uses? (1 point)
17. Will the project include plantings (trees, shrubs, prairie plantings or restoration) to separate incompatible uses, reduce the perception of crowding or screen adjacent uses? (1 point)
18. Has the project been substantially initiated by the sponsor without grant assistance within the last two years?
  - a. The Sponsor has acquired the land or completed more than 50% of the development. (2 points)
  - b. The Sponsor has completed less than 50% of the recreation facilities (1 point)
19. Does the project provide or support substantial multiple use outdoor recreational activities?
  - a. The project has five or more separate outdoor recreational activities. (2 points)
  - b. The project has two to four separate outdoor recreational activities. (1 point)

20. Does the project provide or support substantial multi-seasonal outdoor recreational activities?
  - a. The project has two or more winter activities, or a year round support building (2 points)
  - b. The project has one winter activity (1 point)
21. Does the project involve the use of materials or products utilizing Wisconsin recycled products? (1 point)
22. Does the project acquire land that provides
  - a. One water-based activity? (1 point)
  - b. Two or more water-based activities (2 points)
23. Was a complete application submitted by the deadline (including all documentation required)? (2 points)
24. Does the project exhibit a high level of volunteerism, local cash donations or cooperation by service clubs?
  - a. The project has donations and volunteer labor that equals more than 50% of the local cost share requirement. (2 points)
  - b. The project has donations and volunteer labor less than 50% of the local cost share requirement. (1 point)
25. Will the project serve a population of 10,000 or more (1996 census)? (1 point)
26. Has the sponsor completed all previously funded ADLP, UGS, UR, SB projects? (1 point)
27. Is the project being implemented by two distinct governmental agencies (inter-governmental cooperation)? (1 point)
28. Previous grants:
  - a. The sponsor has never received grant in the past under ADLP, UGS, UR or SB. (3 points)
  - b. The Sponsor has not received a grant in the past 5 years. (1 point)
29. Will the project enhance tourism or economic development?
  - a. Will the project be of regionwide or statewide significance in terms of travel? Private jobs, food service and other sales opportunities are likely to be created. (2 points)
  - b. Will the project attract some visitors from outside the community and will facilities developed create some additional services or sales opportunities for the private sector (1 point).
30. Will the project correct a documented health or safety problem? (1 point)
31. Does the project involve the acquisition of land where the appraisal is complete?
  - a. The appraisal is complete. (1 point)
  - b. The sponsor has completed an option or offer to purchase agreement and an appraisal. (3 points)
32. Tie breakers. When ties occur, a further evaluation of the following criteria will be used to break to tie. One-tenth of a point will be awarded for each of the following:
  - a. Will the project result in a first-of-a kind facility for the project sponsor or service area?
  - b. Will the project provide or support a water based activity?

- c. Will the project provide or support a multipurpose regional or statewide recreational trail?
- d. Are matching funds budgeted or available immediately?
- e. Will the project serve a population of 5,000 or more (1990 census)?
- f. Will the project provide for major improvements in accessibility to a park having limited or no accessibility?.

33. Active project adjustment:

For each active, incomplete project a sponsor has under the Stewardship Program, points will be deducted as follows: one active project = one point; two active projects = three points; three or more active projects = five points.

34. Administrative points. Each region has a total of 0-5 administrative points and may assign these points to selected applications. Points are generally awarded on the region's overall assessment of the local application and how it meets program priorities. Additional considerations could include local resources, absence of proposed type of facilities in the community and importance of this facility to the surrounding region.

## **THE URBAN RIVERS PROGRAM**

### **Program Objectives**

Stewardship allocates \$1.9 million annually to restore or preserve the character of urban riverways through the acquisition of land or easements adjacent to rivers. Funding will be provided for projects that are part of a plan to enhance the quality of a river corridor. The purposes of the program are:

1. To provide for economic revitalization through the restoration or preservation of urban rivers or riverfronts
2. To improve outdoor recreational opportunities by increasing access to urban rivers for a variety of public uses, including but not limited to, fishing, wildlife observation, enjoyment of scenic beauty, canoeing, boating, hiking and bicycling
3. To preserve or restore significant historical, cultural, or natural areas along urban rivers.

UR provides grants to NCOs and municipalities. There is a cap of 20% which means that no sponsor can receive more than 20% of the funds that are available in any fiscal year.

The deadline for receipt of applications for this program is May 1. Applications received after this date cannot be considered until the following year.

### **Grant Criteria**

This is a very competitive program, and as with the last program, it has been necessary to develop a comprehensive rating and ranking system to evaluate projects. Those projects which receive the highest scores will receive funding. For additional information on the rating and ranking system and on specific questions, check with your CSS.

Below is a list of the factors that are considered in the ranking and rating process. All criteria are assigned a value of 0-2 points. One answer is selected per question. Sections left unanswered receive zero values.

1. SCORP (Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan)
  - \* High statewide priority according to SCORP (1 point)
  - \* High region priority according to SCORP (2 points)
2. Natural Heritage Inventory or a historical or cultural site
  - \* The project is on the Natural Heritage Inventory or restores or preserves an area with significant historical or cultural value. (1 point)
  - \* A NHI parcel or a significant historical or cultural site that is in danger of being developed/sold/leased. (2 points)

3. Supports other plans
  - \* The project will implement a recommendation in a Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) plus one other plan. (1 point)
  - \* The project will implement recommendations of a CORP plan plus a riverway plan. (2 points)
4. Water quality plans
  - \* The project will implement recommendations of a water quality management plan which identifies areas that should be protected. (1 point)
  - \* The project will acquire and protect areas identified as critical in a priority watershed plan, sewer service area plan (environmental corridors) or local stormwater planning areas. (2 points)
5. Continues land acquisitions
  - \* The project is in a river plan that has had previous grant program funding for two or more parcels. (1 point)
  - \* The project is in a river plan that has had previous Urban Rivers grant program funding for three or more parcels. (2 points)
6. Scenic Urban Waterway\*\*
  - \* The project is located on a Scenic Urban Waterway. (1 point)
  - \* The project is located on a Scenic Urban Waterway and provides a link to another river corridor plan, making it regional in significance.

\*\*Rivers that have been designated as Scenic Urban Waterways include: Illinois Fox River and its watershed; Fox River and its watershed from Lake Winnebago to Green Bay; Rock River within the City of Watertown; Rock River from Jefferson to Fort Atkinson; Rock River from Janesville to the Illinois border.
7. Natural resource values
  - \* The project will improve water quality by acquiring existing erosion problem area(s) or converting hard surfaced land to greenspace. The project will be left in a natural state.
  - \* The project acquires wetlands as defined in the Priority Wetland Plan or restores wetlands or protects a key habitat area that will be left in a natural state. (2 points)
8. Outdoor recreation for all
  - \* The project expands outdoor recreation near an urban center. (1 point)
  - \* The project will serve the documented needs of special populations in urban areas. (2 points)
9. Public access to river
  - \* The project will improve an existing public access. (1 point)
  - \* The project provides access to the river where none is available now. (2 points)
10. Community support
  - \* The project will be supported by a local service or business organization or nonprofit conservation organization. (1 point)

- \* The project will be supported by two or more local service, business organizations or nonprofit conservation organizations. (2 points)
11. Two or more units of government
- \* The planning area has 2 or more local units of government cooperating. (1 point)
  - \* County wide or two or more counties cooperating (2 points)
12. Potential for increasing tourism
- \* The project is large enough to serve as a regional destination point or connects to some type of regional trail or corridor system. (1 point)
  - \* The project will serve as a major attraction such as corridor lands that are used for large festivals or similar gatherings that are of statewide significance (2 points)
13. Potential benefits to the overall economy of the municipality
- \* The project is identified as necessary in a river plan, to create partnerships that will generate private sector outdoor recreation support industries. (1 point)
  - \* The project will create opportunities to renovate urban centers for businesses which will directly take advantage of the river greenway being created by the project. (2 points)
14. Aesthetic value
- \* The project will acquire and protect existing green space area(s). (1 point)
  - \* The project will acquire lands that are presently developed and will include substantial renovation/revitalization of a blighted riverfront area.
15. Tie Breaker
- \* The project appraisal(s) are completed. (1 point)
  - \* The project options are secured. (2 points)
16. Active project adjustment
- For each active, incomplete project a sponsor has under the Stewardship Program, points will be deducted as follows: one active project will deduct one point; two active projects will deduct three points; three or more active projects will deduct five points from the total project application score.



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## **Land Acquisition Guidelines for Nonprofit Conservation Organizations Seeking Grants from the Department of Natural Resources**

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Nonprofit conservation organizations (NCOs) applying to the Department of Natural Resources for grants to purchase land or partial interests in land (easements) must follow certain acquisition, appraisal and relocation procedures in order to be eligible to receive grants. Failure to comply with these procedures may disqualify an organization for funding. These procedures are designed to ensure fairness, meet federal and state government requirements, and also protect the interests of landowners, NCOs and the state.

There is a Community Services Specialist (CSS) in each of the five DNR Regions who can answer any questions you have and also guide you through these procedures. Please feel free to call this person whenever you have a question. Their telephone numbers are listed on the last page.

### **Landowner Notification**

All negotiations between a landowner and NCO must be conducted on a "willing seller - willing buyer" basis, that is, without coercion. Pursuant to NR. 51.03(7), if an NCO plans to apply for a grant under the Stewardship Program, it must notify the landowner in writing of its intent to do so and also indicate that any grant it receives will be based on Department approved property valuation guidelines.

The simplest way to do this is by including the following statement in either the Option to Purchase or the Offer to Purchase:

*"Name of Group may apply for a grant under the Stewardship Program. Any grant it receives will be based on Department of Natural Resources property valuation guidelines."*

If an NCO cannot purchase a property unless assured of receiving a grant, it may also wish to add this statement:

*"This option is contingent upon receipt of a state grant."*

Another way to notify a landowner is to send a letter (see Exhibit A for a sample).

### **Environmental Hazards Report**

Grant payments cannot be made until the Department has received and approved an Environmental Hazards Assessment Report (DNR Form #1800-1) indicating that a property contains no existing or potential undesirable environmental conditions or hazards. This is an extremely important part of the acquisition process and should be undertaken by the NCO as soon as feasible, preferably before an

Offer to Purchase is signed. The long-term financial ramifications of purchasing property with environmental hazards are significant and could conceivably destroy the financial viability of an organization.

Use the Environmental Hazards Assessment Report form as a guide to assist you in doing an adequate inspection of a property.

If it is determined that there is potential liability due to hazardous conditions, the Department may reject the grant application on that basis. Likewise, an NCO should reconsider its decision to purchase. If the condition is questionable, the Department may ask the NCO to arrange for a complete environmental audit by personnel approved by the Department to determine the full extent of the problem. An NCO is eligible for 50% grant assistance for such an audit if it receives a grant for the parcel.

### **Appraisals**

Because the amount of a grant award is based on appraised fair market value, not the purchase price, property appraisals are required for all grants for property acquisition. One appraisal is required for property valued below \$200,000; two are required for property above \$200,000. The Department may also request a second appraisal for property valued under \$200,000 if the property presents a difficult appraisal problem or the initial appraisal does not meet Department standards.

All appraisals must comply with established Department guidelines. Appraisals prepared under these guidelines adhere to the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practice and the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisition. The Department has prepared a technical bulletin which explains these standards in detail. For a copy, ask your CSS for the *Real Estate Appraisal Guidelines*, revised in 1995.

If the property has a market value above \$50,000, a Full Narrative Report is required. If the market value is between \$15,000 and \$50,000 and if the appraisal is an uncomplicated one, a Short Form appraisal is adequate. When the market value is under \$15,000, an Opinion of Value is satisfactory if the appraisal is uncomplicated and the expense of purchasing a more extensive appraisal would be excessive in relation to its value. These different types of appraisals are explained in the *Real Estate Appraisal Guidelines*.

Appraisals must be performed by State Licensed or Certified Appraisers depending on property type. The use of General Certified Appraisers is recommended as they can appraise all types of property without value limits. Licensed and Residential Certified Appraisers may only appraise non-residential real estate up to a value of \$250,000, and residential property to \$1,000,000.

All appraisals are subject to Department review and approval. Because the Department cannot accept an appraisal which fails to conform to the standards, we recommend you choose an appraiser who is familiar with Department guidelines and has previously completed acceptable work in public land acquisition. Your local DNR Real Estate Supervisor will work with you and the appraiser you choose to obtain an appraisal which complies with the guidelines (your CSS can provide you with the name of the Real Estate Supervisor).

We also recommend you and the appraiser agree beforehand that payment will be made only if the appraisal meets Department standards. This should include any additional time required by the appraiser to bring the appraisal report into conformance. You may wish to get several bids for an appraisal, as the cost can vary significantly.

If you have difficulty locating a qualified appraiser, check with your CSS for assistance. The DNR Real Estate Supervisor may also grant a written exception for routine appraisal assignments under \$50,000 to permit appraisals by unlicensed or uncertified appraisers if there are no qualified appraisers available to complete the work in a timely manner.

Before the appraiser can proceed, a legal description or survey of the area to be appraised **must be provided** to the appraiser, along with information about any rights, encumbrances or uses being retained by the landowner. The appraiser should value **only** the property rights being purchased by the NCO. Failure to provide this information could invalidate an appraisal.

In general, the Department will not provide grants for the purchase of houses or outbuildings even if they are within project boundaries unless there is a compelling reason to do so. If a parcel with buildings is purchased by an NCO, the value of the buildings and land immediately surrounding those buildings will, in most cases, be deducted when determining grant amounts. (The number of acres deducted may need to be sufficient to meet local zoning requirements.) **This will have a significant impact on DNR appraisal needs so it is important to discuss this with your CSS before ordering an appraisal.**

Timing is a critical factor when ordering an appraisal. On the one hand, an NCO may not want to incur the expense of the appraisal unless it is assured of receiving a grant. On the other hand, the appraisal must be done in a timely manner or the appraised value will not accurately reflect the market value at the time of the sale. While an NCO does have some flexibility as to when it orders an appraisal, the effective date of the actual valuation should be within one year before or up to the date of purchase by the NCO. **The effective date of the value should not be after the date of purchase.**

The appraisal process is detailed and can be lengthy. We recommend that you order the appraisal as early in the acquisition process as feasible. It frequently will be to your advantage to do so. If you do the appraisal before you actually execute an Offer to Purchase, you will know the market value of the land before you negotiate a price. In addition, you will know how much grant funding you are eligible to receive which could affect the amount you can offer for the property.

### **Relocation Benefits**

Relocation is a program governed by federal and state laws which protects persons displaced by public projects or projects that receive public funding. The purpose of relocation laws is to ensure that persons are treated fairly and compensated fairly for their property and for any other losses incurred as a result of a publicly funded project.

Any organization which receives grant funds for more than 10% of acquisition costs from the state or federal government must comply with relocation laws. This means that if an NCO receives a grant from the Department for property whose purchase will cause the involuntary relocation of a tenant,

the tenant is eligible for relocation assistance from the NCO. The dollar amount of this assistance is set by the Department of Commerce which administers relocation laws. Relocation costs vary greatly depending on the situation, but they rarely exceed \$5,000. NCOs are eligible for 50% grant assistance for relocation.

The responsibility for complying with required procedures rests with the buyer under state and federal law. If a tenant is being displaced, the NCO may have to prepare a Relocation Plan in accordance with Department of Commerce guidelines or it may receive a written determination from the Department of Commerce that relocation payments are unnecessary. Information pamphlets on relocation benefits can be obtained by contacting the Relocation Office, Department of Commerce, Division of Community Development, 123 West Washington, Box 7970, Madison, WI 53707. The telephone number is 608-264-7822.

An owner who voluntarily sells a property to an NCO is not considered a displaced person under the relocation laws, nor is a tenant who can remain permanently on a property subject to normal rental conditions.

If a tenant voluntarily decides to move, either at the time of the purchase or later, the NCO should have that tenant sign a statement indicating that the decision to move is a voluntary one.

### **Title Insurance**

Title insurance or other evidence of marketable title must be approved by the Department for both land and easement acquisitions. Any property subject to a reversionary right or which has restrictions or covenants that limit the ability of the property to be managed for conservation or public recreational purposes will not be eligible for a grant.

NCO's sometimes make the mistake of ordering their title insurance policy near the end of the grant process. This can cause considerable difficulty if the Department receives a title commitment shortly before a closing and discovers the title has major defects which either disallow the grant or stall the process until the matter is cleared up. This has occurred on several occasions so we recommend that you send us a copy of your title commitment as soon as possible after a grant has been approved.

### **DNR Regional Offices**

If you have any questions about these guidelines or anything else relating to grant programs available to NCOs, please contact a Community Assistance Specialist (CSS) in your Region.

1. **South Central Region:** Stefanie Brouwer, 3911 Fish Hatchery Rd., Fitchburg, WI 53711 608-275-3218  
Counties: Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Richland, Rock, Sauk
2. **Southeast Region:** Dan Kaemmerer, Box 12436, Milwaukee, WI 53212 414-263-8704  
Counties: Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Sheboygan, Walworth, Washington, Waukesha
3. **Northeastern Region:** Jeff Pagels, Box 10448, Green Bay, WI 54307 414-492-5821

- Counties: Brown, Calumet, Door, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Marquette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie, Shawano, Waupaca, Waushara, Winnebago
4. West Central Region: Karen Blodgett, Box 4001, Eau Claire, WI 54702 715-836-6574  
Counties: Adams, Buffalo, Chippewa, Clark, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, Juneau, LaCrosse, Marathon, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Portage, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Vernon, Wood
5. Northern Region: Pat Zatopa, 107 Sutliff Ave., WI 54501 715-365-8928  
Counties: Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Oneida, Price, Taylor, Vilas  
Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Burnett, Douglas, Polk, Rusk, Sawyer, Washburn,

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EXHIBIT A: SAMPLE NOTIFICATION LETTER

Jane and John Landowner  
1482 Beautiful Street  
Anywhere, Wisconsin

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Landowner:

The purpose of this letter is to advise you that the *Name of Organization* intends to apply for a Stewardship grant from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to cover part of the costs of acquiring your property. If we receive a grant, the amount of the grant will be determined by Department property valuation guidelines.

It has been a pleasure to work with you. *Name of Organization* appreciates the opportunity to preserve the natural beauty of your land for the people of Wisconsin.

Sincerely,